

# Good Stories for Children

BY  
WALT McDougall.

## Andrew's Visit to the Siren's Island Continues to Abound in Wonders, Both for Him and the Ancient Greeks

ANDREW FIELDS was left in the story last week in great danger from the Chimera, which was approaching him rapidly. The animal was near enough before the boy ran away for him to clearly see it and note all of its peculiarities very plainly. He saw that it was of enormous size, being larger than an elephant, but of a most remarkable shape, which altered every moment as it came on. At one instant it appeared very large, but in an instant it changed like a cloud of smoke both in size and shape, so that it was impossible to say what it really resembled.

Yet, on the whole, its general form was unlike that of any other animal he had ever heard of, being very short-bodied, with long legs and a very long, thick neck that coiled like a serpent. Its forelegs were nearly as long as its neck and it had great claws. No photograph of the Chimera had ever been taken, and I had to make the picture from Andrew's description. You may be sure he didn't spend much time studying its shape, but he quickly followed the fleeing Greeks into a small cavern that went very far back into the hill, so that the animal could not get his body in at all, although he managed to push his ugly head well into the entrance. The Greeks were so terrified that they, and the Siren also, crept into the remotest part of the cave, but Andrew, seeing that the Chimera could get no farther, stood and closely observed it as it writhed and twisted, making a horrible noise all the time and foaming at the mouth from rage.

Soon a man named Oedipus G. Themistocles came to Andrew and whispered to him that they had found another opening, and said that they were all going out before the Chimera became small again and got in after them. This was a very wise suggestion, and Andrew followed him, going out another exit far on the side of the mountain.

The cavern had many passages, and it is supposed that the Chimera lost himself in the labyrinth, as he did not come out after them. The light-hearted Greeks soon forgot their terror and reclined in the shade of the tall palm and fig trees, but Andrew was anxious to further explore the land and he did not remain long idle. As he rose to leave them, the Siren said:

"Be careful to keep in the shade, for there are sun-dogs in the sky!"

"I am not afraid of them," replied Andrew. "Nor of moon-cats, either."

Jason rose from the grass and said: "If you have no objection, I will go with you."

They went along through the wonderful forest for some yards, when suddenly the blue sea sparkled through the trees and Andrew then became convinced that he had fallen upon an island, as he suspected. The shore stretched along for miles, but conspicuous upon the white sand rose a dark object that Andrew instantly saw was the wreck of an ancient ship, a vessel totally unlike those which came up the river at home. The stern was toward the shore, and above the sloping deck was a sort of tower with many windows. He remembered to have seen pictures of such ships, and knew that this one must be hundreds of years old.

### A HOLD FULL OF POWDER

They climbed aboard of the wreck, and finding the hatchways open entered her hold. The Greek had never seen so large a ship and he was immensely interested by all he saw. In his time a vessel with one sail was a great affair, and most boats were propelled by oars, several rows of them, sometimes one above the other, but this vessel, he saw at once, must have had many sails and could have carried hundreds of sailors. When they entered the cabin they found suits of armor and weapons all scattered about, and in the lockers they discovered charts and maps, with the great log-book, which showed that the ship was the *Flor de Fuma*, of Portugal, and had been commanded by the famous explorer Don Miguel de Couche.

"Do you suppose the Siren got the crew?" asked Andrew.

"I think not," said Jason, when Andrew explained what he had read in the log-book. "I think the ship was deserted at sea by the crew and captain far from shore. She must have drifted here after many years of wandering to and fro over the sea."

"Let's examine the lower hold and see what we can find," said Andrew. Down in the darker hold they found many barrels, and upon Jason breaking one open, Andrew soon proved that it contained powder, which showed that the vessel had been a war ship. All the barrels were filled with powder, enough for a fleet it seemed, and perhaps this was the store-ship for some old fort far away on the African or Indian coast in the days when the Portuguese had control of those seas, before the English Navy was ever dreamed of.

"It's a good thing we didn't bring a light down here!" exclaimed Andrew.

"Why?" inquired the Greek. "I do not see any reason for that remark."

"We might have blown up the ship and ourselves," the boy explained, "for that's gunpowder!" "Is it more dangerous than face-powder?" asked Jason.

"Well, I should think so!" cried Andrew, and then he told the man all about the wonderful qualities of this explosive. Jason was much amazed and said: "That may have been the very stuff that Jupiter used to make his thunder with. I should like to see it work."

"Well, I'll show you how it explodes," said Andrew, "unless it's too old or damp. But we must try it some distance from the ship." He gathered a handful of gunpowder, and they walked along the beach until he found a tree with a small hole in its trunk. Into this he poured the powder, cramming a handful of dry grass on top of it as a wad; then while Jason stepped back according to his directions for a few paces, he lighted the grass. It was but a few seconds before the powder exploded with a bang that frightened the Greek so that he started to run away, but stopped when he saw that Andrew was laughing at him.

The noise was so loud that it was heard by the Siren and the rest, and they all came running to see what had caused it. Great was the astonishment when Jason told them that Andrew had given such a perfect imitation of Jove's thunder, and they stared at the torn tree trunk, blasted as if by lightning, with some fear. Andrew told them how the moderns make cannon and showed them those upon



THE CHIMERA APPROACHES THE OLD VASE

the ship, old brass guns about as big as boys now have for the Fourth of July, but they seemed very awful to his listeners, and when Andrew loaded one and fired it, after much trouble and delay, it was all they could do to keep from running away at once.

Then he hunted up an old cannon-ball not as big as a lemon and he fired that out over the calm water, and as they saw the little ball go skipping along over the sea they realized what a wonderful thing this black powder is.

"Ha!" exclaimed Themistocles. "A man in the heaviest armor would stand no show at all against such a projectile!"

"No," said Andrew. "That's why they stopped wearing armor, for even a boy could send a bullet through the thickest breastplate."

"Perhaps," said Jason, "it was by these things that all the gods were destroyed. Although the gods could have made even bigger cannon than these, I suppose."

"We have them so large that a man can crawl into them easily," said Andrew, "and they are being made larger every day. We can shoot ten miles with them!" Andrew stated this fact as proudly as he would have done had he made the big guns himself.

"Shoot it off again," said Themistocles. "I like it."

"No! no!" cried the Siren. "I am quite deaf. I feel as if I should fly when I think of it. I saw that ship drifting shoreward many years ago and had I dreamed of such a terrible cargo I should have asked the merman, who then dwelt near these shores, to tow her off before she touched land. I do not like to think of such mysterious dangers right under my nose."

"I am very glad she did come ashore," said Andrew, "for now we have a means of destroying the Chimera without the least danger to ourselves. It will be just as easy to blow the creature up as it was to shatter that tree."

"That's good news," said the Siren. "I have had no peace since it came here!"

"When I saw it I was surprised," said Themistocles, "for I have seen paintings upon the walls of the great palace of Minos, in Crete, and it was there represented to be like a lion with a goat's head sticking up in the middle of its back and a snake for a tail."

"I assure you I did not stop to examine it," said Jason. "I was in too much of a hurry, let me tell you!"

"I took a good look at it before it got away," said Andrew, "and it doesn't look like a lion at all. In fact, it was much more like a thingumbob."

"I do not remember having seen a thingumbob," said the Siren, "but I do know that the Chimera changes its shape so often and so suddenly that it might resemble anything in the world. It's about the only thing Hercules was afraid of, and I am not surprised at all."

"I suppose it's still waiting outside the cavern," said Andrew. "We might sneak around and see whether it is there yet."

"Not if!" exclaimed the Siren. "I am satisfied to leave it undisturbed. What Hercules feared is not for us to meddle with."

"Was there really such a man as Hercules?" asked Andrew.

"Indeed there was," replied the Siren. "He was a great King in far-off Iberia, and I well remember

seeing him in his rather poorly-fitting lion skin suit at the Olympic Games. I suppose you know what the Olympic Games were?"

Andrew did not wish to appear ignorant, so he promptly answered: "Oh, a hop-scotch, prisoner's base and mumblepeg, I suppose."

"I never heard of any of these," said the Siren. "Neither did I, and I've attended the games for years," added Themistocles.

"Wrestling, throwing the discus, racing and jumping were the specialties there," said Jason. "I took a prize myself in the time of Solon. They tried to get it away from me on the charge that I was a professional, but it did not work."

Just then the Siren shrieked and darted away. Andrew looked around and saw the dreaded Chimera moving along the ridge of rocks beyond the fringe of forest that skirted the shore.

The Greeks all sprang up and fled along the sand, although the animal had not seen any of them, as it was looking the other way. He could see it plainly, and it certainly did not look anything like a lion with a goat's head on its back. He thought that the ancient artists could not really have seen the Chimera, but just painted it from their imagination. However, he didn't spend much time studying it, but quickly followed the Siren and in a few minutes all were safe in another grotto in the cliff.

This cavern was, like the others, narrow at the entrance, but widened into a great vault, all frosted with gleaming silver fretted and groined like a vast cathedral roof, a fairy cavern into whose depths the sunlight penetrated in a glow that turned the pools of water on the floor into liquid gold. The Chimera could not follow them here it was certain, and the Greeks all became perfectly unconcerned as soon as they were in safety, but Andrew grew very angry as he thought of the animal chasing them perpetually, and wished to get to work and settle upon some method of destroying their tormentor.

"What does it eat?" he asked the Siren.

### WILLING TO SACRIFICE HIMSELF

"It feeds mostly upon the whistling rabbits and the singing turtles," she replied, "as it can capture them very easily by lying concealed in the grass until they approach, but it prefers to eat men."

"If you can fill a man with that gunpowder," said Themistocles, "and then explode him as the Chimera starts eating him, I think you might easily accomplish your purpose."

"Ah, but where shall we get the man?" asked Andrew.

"One of us will serve," replied Jason. "A Greek fears not to die for his country." "A Greek

"But this isn't your country," replied Andrew. "I don't like the idea of wasting a man, especially an ancient Greek one, for they are now very, very scarce indeed. I think another way can be found."

"The Chimera is very fond of honey," said a man who wore a sheepskin garment. "I have heard that upon the mountains of Hymettus it steals the hives from under the very nose of the guardians who protect the honey for the gods."

### FINDING THE WRECK



## He Finds an Old Wreck, and with Gunpowder Taken from It Destroys the Chimera, and Leaves the Strange Place

mera did at times, serpents that nursed children, Hydras with nine heads, Stags with horns of gold and hoofs of brass, birds with iron talons, man-eating horses of Geryon, who had three bodies and six arms, Cerberus, the dog who guarded the infernal realms, Pandora's box and a hundred other marvels, many of which he had before read of in Mythology but which seemed quite new when related by men of such an ancient date as these. The peculiar thing about all these stories was the fact that they were said by the narrators to have happened as long before their time as the Greeks were before ours.

Jason told Andrew that every one of these incredible stories was founded upon fact, but this the lad was loth to believe. He did think, however, that it was quite true, as Jason stated, that the old Greek gods were only men whose deeds had caused them to be revered and finally worshipped. On the other hand, they were even more interested in what he had to tell them about America and what had happened in the world since the Siren had put them under her spell. He was surprised to learn that they knew the world to be round, and that it went around the sun and that they had indistinct notions about a land across the Atlantic, and when he said that he wished he could take them all home with him they heartily echoed the wish.

Anaxus, one of the oldest of the warriors, who had been listening thoughtfully for a long time, suddenly spoke and said:

"I am a ship builder from Gades," said he, "and I think that we might make that wrecked vessel serviceable once more without much trouble. Then we could sail to this new world."

All the Greeks sprang up eagerly, for most of them being sailors as well as warriors or shepherds, knew much about ships and they hurried to examine the wreck. Anaxus soon decided that the dry climate had marvelously preserved her, and he took charge of the work of making her seaworthy once more.

First, however, Andrew secured enough honey for his purpose, and with Jason went to a valley where the Chimera's footprints showed everywhere, and there they placed the amphora, filled with gunpowder, the outside of the ancient vase being smeared thickly with honey, the fragrance of which soon filled the air, and then laid down a train of gunpowder along the rocky ground for many yards, after which they hid in a tiny cave among the rocks and waited.

Night came without the appearance of the Chimera, but they slept in the cave and once in the night they were awakened by a sound which they thought was caused by the creature, but they saw nothing.

### ALL REACHED HOME IN SAFETY

Early in the morning Jason saw the Chimera approaching with its snake neck outstretched and its nose to the ground, for it had scented the honey afar off and was seeking for it. When it saw the vase it hurried to it, and eagerly and without hesitation began to lick the honey up. It grew smaller as it fed, and for a moment Andrew had an insane desire to capture it alive and take it home, but when he remembered how immense it had been when he saw it last he decided to go on with his original plan. He took out a match and struck it upon the rock, then lighted the train of powder. Instantly the flash of powder ran along the narrow black pathway, and then the vase exploded with a tremendous report. An immense cloud of smoke ascended into the air, but above it and in it they could see pieces of the Chimera sailing aloft. Then a shower of fragments came down around them; among them, the entire head of the animal, the smoke slowly drifted away and there on the hilltop they saw all of the Greeks staring down at them in wonder.

The Chimera was destroyed. Andrew kept the awful head to take home for exhibition, and the fragments were burned in a great bonfire around which they all danced in great glee. Then they went to work repairing the wreck.

It took them a month to get the ship in proper condition, and then two months more to weave sails of grasses, the only thing they could use for the purpose, and when they had loaded her with a great supply of the wonderful fruits of the island they all went aboard and sailed away.

The voyage was uneventful, the sea being calm and the winds always favorable, but one morning when all had gathered at the breakfast-table the Siren was found to be missing! The whole ship was searched for her, but she could not be found. Many and various were the surmises advanced to account for her disappearance, but nothing really accounted for it and to this day nobody can explain it. Some think that she was carried away by some marine creature, others think that the Siren's wings that are shown in ancient pictures suddenly sprouted and she promptly flew back to her magic island. Some also think that she could not exist beyond a certain distance from this island and was compelled to return.

At any rate, she was never seen again by any sailors, nor in fact has this wondrous island ever been discovered since. Andrew was immensely disappointed at losing her, as she was the most precious of all the cargo, of course. The Greeks, who were always afraid that she would change them into other shapes, were rather glad when she was reported as missing, but Andrew grieved for several days.

When the ship finally reached America all the Greeks were surrounded by an immense crowd of people, and all the circus managers and the proprietors of dime museums were anxious to engage them at once, but Andrew, having found lots of gold on the old ship, refused to allow them to be put on exhibition. Instead, he took them all over the United States showing them the wonders of the country until they were dazed.

Then they went back to Greece, where they are still living and exploring, as well as explaining the ancient ruins of that country to visitors. Andrew, now a wealthy man, still lives with his mother and sisters, and in the front garden you may see the great shoe filled with flowers brought from the Siren's Island, while in the front parlor hangs the Chimera's awful head. If you go there he will tell you the story just as he told it to me, and perhaps much more that I have forgotten.

WALT McDougall.